

## In Brief: Wisconsin

According to the [US Crisis Monitor](#), Wisconsin has recorded 375 demonstrations since May 24 — ranking 14th in the United States (and 12th in terms of events per capita). **Of the 375 demonstrations, 91 percent (or 342) were recorded as peaceful.** 72.5 percent were related to the Black Lives Matter movement, 88 percent of which were peaceful. 12 percent of all demonstrations were COVID-19 related, and 2 percent were related to “Back the Blue” or “Blue Lives Matter.”

These demonstrations are concentrated in a few counties, with Milwaukee, Dane (Madison city), Kenosha, Brown (Green Bay city), and Waukesha Counties accounting for 65 percent of all demonstrations (or 245). Ashland County had the most demonstrations per capita, followed by Kenosha, Eau Claire, and Dane Counties.

In the broad category of contentious demonstrations, 8.8 percent of all demonstrations (or 33 events) were contentious. Contention includes any peaceful demonstration met by state (police, other law enforcement) or non-state (active counter-protesters, citizens) intervention, as well as excessive use of force by the state or violence by/associated with demonstrators. Though significantly less in number, these contentious events may be potential flashpoints for further contention.

Of the 33 contentious events, 88 percent (or 29 events) were met by some form of state intervention. Of those 29 events, 55 percent (or 16 events) saw the use of tear gas, pepper spray, or rubber munitions by the police as a crowd control measure. 15 percent of all contentious demonstrations saw the presence of counter-protesters (3 events) or militia or armed actors (2 events).

All contentious demonstrations occurred in one of six counties, with Milwaukee, Kenosha, and Dane Counties seeing 91 percent of all contentious events.

### Political violence & risk factors

Four percent of all demonstrations (or 14 events) saw the presence of counter-protesters — 78.5 percent of which remained peaceful. These 14 events were spread across either counties, with Kenosha and Milwaukee topping the list with four and three events respectively.

Wisconsin saw 38 police-involved killings in 21 counties since September 2018.<sup>1</sup> Police shootings have not only been salient flashpoints for large-scale protests but may also undermine community trust in and cooperation with police, further impeding the ability for the state and community to respond to contentious events.

The state recorded at least 1 white supremacist event, 99 occurrences of white supremacist propaganda, and 28 anti-semitic events over the past year, with the majority of these events occurring in the greater Milwaukee area, Appleton city (Outagamie County), Madison (Dane County), and Juneau County.<sup>2</sup> Preliminary analysis suggests that the presence or activity of extremists groups, like white supremacist groups, can be associated with future conflict.

### Select Counties with State & National Comparison [May 24 - October 17, 2020]

County	Recorded Militia Present	Total Demonstrations	% Contentious (Protesters, State, or External)	% With State Intervention	% Met with Counter-Protesters
Ashland	No	4	-	-	25%
Brown	No	17	6%	6%	-
Dane	Yes	69	9%	7%	-
Eau Claire	No	14	-	-	14%
Kenosha	Yes	35	20%	14%	11%
Milwaukee	Yes	108	16%	15%	3%
Racine	No	9	11%	11%	-
Rock	No	9	-	-	11%
Waukesha	No	16	-	-	-
Waupaca	No	3	33%	33%	-
Winnebago	No	7	-	-	14%
Wisconsin	-	375	9%	8%	4%
National	-	14752	9%	7%	5%

*Total demonstrations include all peaceful and contentious protests. Demonstrations with state intervention are police force intervention.*  
Source: [US Crisis Monitor, ACLED \(2020\)](#)

### Actors of Concern

Six counties (Kenosha, Milwaukee, Oconto, Dane, Columbia, and Dodge) have seen militia activity since June 2020. Prominent unlawful paramilitia or militia-related organizations include: Proud Boys,

<sup>1</sup> Includes all events from 6 Sept 2018 to 6 Sept 2020 from the [Mapping Police Violence data](#)

<sup>2</sup> Includes all events from 31 Aug 2019 to 31 Aug 2020 from the [ADL HEAT Map](#)

Boogaloo Bois, North Coast Peacekeepers, [Kenosha Guard Militia](#), and Civilian Defense Force.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has [mapped 15 hate organizations in Wisconsin](#) across roughly four ideologies: white nationalist,<sup>3</sup> Black separatist, anti-Muslim, and anti-LGBTQ. Seven of the 15 organizations are statewide, while six are based in Milwaukee.

## Election Factors

Wisconsin is one of seven battleground states in the upcoming presidential election. In 2016, President Trump won Wisconsin's 10 electoral votes with 47.2% of the vote (to Hillary Clinton's 46.4%). In 2016, only Menominee County voted overwhelmingly (i.e. >75%) for a candidate — Hillary Clinton received 78.4 percent of the vote.

Menominee and Milwaukee counties have minority populations over 30% (at 90.9% and 47.3% respectively)<sup>4</sup> — a possible target for increased racially-motivated violence and/or intimidation ahead around the election. Racine, Kenosha, and Sayer counties also have high minority populations (>23%).

## Incidents and trends of note

On September 17, a [man died following a vehicle pursuit with Monona police](#). Police alleged that the driver of the vehicle, Ello Johnson, committed suicide after crashing his vehicle. However, [members of the community have questioned the officers' version of events](#), which in turn sparked several protests. According to several reports, community trust in the Monona police was already low following an incident on [June 2](#).

### Many protests across WI have been sparked by past and recent police shootings.

August 23, [Kenosha police shot and seriously injured Jacob Blake](#). The shooting sparked a large series of new demonstrations in Kenosha and across the country, including an August 25 demonstration in Kenosha where [a teenager shot and killed two demonstrators and injured another](#). The shooter was responding to a Kenosha Guard call-to-action. Police reportedly welcomed the suspect and other armed individuals at the demonstration prior to the shooting. **Protests**

<sup>3</sup> Includes neo-Nazi, neo-Volkisch, racist skinhead, Ku Klux Klan, and hate music organizations

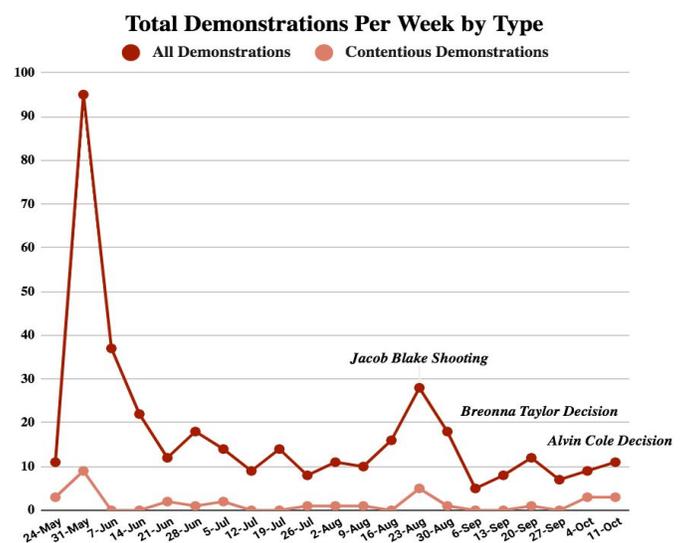
<sup>4</sup> Menominee County has an estimated population of 4,556 and is coterminous with the boundaries of the Menominee Indian Reservation.

**spiked in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, but have since tapered off.**

On August 14 over [100 protesters called for the firing of a police officer](#) who has [shot and killed three people in the past five years](#).

On July 31, [upwards of 50 people demonstrated in Oshkosh](#) against police brutality and the death of Isaiah Tucker, a Black man killed by two Oshkosh police officers in 2017.

On July 13, [protesters called for the dismissal of a Milwaukee Police Officer](#) over the death of Joel Acevedo, a Black person who was allegedly killed by an off-duty police officer.



On July 2, a [police officer in Sheboygan fatally shot Kevan Ruffin](#), an African American man, who was allegedly armed with knives — according to his family, [Ruffin had a mental health condition that the police were aware of. This event sparked several protests.](#)

### Wisconsin has also recorded activity by unlawful paramilitary and armed actors.

On October 7, an [organized armed group gathered in Milwaukee to "protect homes"](#) in anticipation of unrest following the [decision by the District Attorney](#) to not file charges against the officer involved in the fatal shooting of Alvin Cole. This decision has [sparked multiple protests](#) across Milwaukee County and the state.

On September 1, a large pro-BLM protest in Kenosha was met by [counter-protesters, including members of the Proud Boys](#). On August 24, a small unidentified armed group showed up at a demonstration in Madison against police brutality and the shooting of Jacob Blake to "prevent" violence and ensure safety.